

## **The Planning Area - Historic Background**

Region D consist of Alleghany, Ashe, Wilkes, Watauga, Avery, Mitchell and Yancy counties. These counties are located in the Blue Ridge Region of the Land Resource Regions of North Carolina. This major land resource area has elevations ranging from 984 feet in the lower valleys and foot slopes to over 6,600 feet in the mountains along the North Carolina - Tennessee boundary. More than two - thirds of the land area is forested, and about twenty percent is made up of national parks and forests, with many parts being popular recreation and resort locations. Small farms (mostly part-time enterprises) in coves and valleys compose the croplands, which make up one-tenth of the region's land area. Few natural lakes exist in the region, but many of the area's rivers feature dams used for flood control, recreation and the production of hydroelectric power. The lower mountain slopes and valleys support Appalachian Oak Forest vegetation such as white pine, hemlock, with oak-red oak-hickory, chestnut oak, northern red oak-basswood-white ash, loblolly pine-shortleaf pine and yellow poplar-white oak-northern red oak, while balsam fir and red spruce grow in the higher elevations. Understory vegetation consists of hornbeam, dogwood, sassafras, pawpaw, persimmon, greenbrier, leatherwood, mountain-laurel, rhododendron and witchhazel.

### **Alleghany County**

Alleghany was formed in 1859 from Ashe. It was named for an Indian tribe, and the name is derived from "a corruption of the Delaware Indian name for the Alleghany and Ohio Rivers" and is said to have meant "a fine stream." It is in the northwestern section of North Carolina and is bounded by the state of Virginia and Surry, Wilkes and Ashe counties. The present area is 225 square miles and the 1990 population was 9590.

### **Ashe County**

Ashe was formed in 1799 from Wilkes. It was named in honor of Samual Ashe, a Revolutionary patriot, a superior court judge, and Governor of the State. It is in the northwestern section of the State and is bounded by the states of Tennessee and Virginia and the counties of Alleghany, Wilkes and Watauga. The present area is 426 square miles and the 1990 population was 22,209.

### **Wilkes County**

Wilkes was formed in 1777 from Surry and the District of Washington. The act was to become effective February 15, 1788. It was named in honor of John Wilkes who was a violent opponent of the Tory party in England. He was not allowed to take his seat in Parliament to which he had been elected.